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PTQ5423

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00	VC-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	ACE-00
	USIE-00	EPAE-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/004W
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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4447
INFO NSC WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000026

STATE FOR WHA/AND (NARANJO) WHA/PDA (BYER) NSC FOR (MAISTO)
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL/OADR: 01/08/02
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE, KPAO
SUBJECT: PROTEST AT "EL NACIONAL" NEWSPAPER HINTS AT
- INCREASED PRESSURE AGAINST MEDIA

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CLASSIFIED BY DONNA J. HRINAK, AMBASSADOR. REASONS 1.5 (B)
AND (D)

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: ONE DAY AFTER PRESIDENT CHAVEZ HAD
CRITICIZED THE NEWSPAPER DURING HIS NATIONAL ADDRESS, ON
THE EVENING OF JANUARY 7 A GROUP OF SOME 75 CHAVEZ
SUPPORTERS DEMONSTRATED IN FRONT OF THE ENTRANCE TO LEADING
LIBERAL DAILY "EL NACIONAL" NEWSPAPER, BLOCKING ACCESS TO
THE BUILDING. THE PROTESTERS CARRIED SIGNS AND CHANTED
SLOGANS PROTESTING THE PAPER'S EDITORIAL LINE, AFFIRMING

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 8 JAN 2017
DATE/CASE ID: 16 FEB 2007 200503643

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THAT IT "LIES" AND RECALLING THE CONSTITUTION'S ARTICLE 58 (THE RIGHT TO TRUE, OPPORTUNE AND IMPARTIAL INFORMATION). AFTER TWO HOURS, NATIONAL GUARD AND POLICEMEN DISPERSED THE DEMONSTRATION WITH TEAR GAS AND WATER CANNON.

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BACKGROUND

2. (C) ON JANUARY 6 PRESIDENT CHAVEZ VISITED THE CARACAS WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD OF CATIA. MEDIA ACCOUNTS AGREED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SUPPORTERS BARELY FILLED HALF A BASKETBALL COURT, AND THAT THE ANTI-CHAVEZ "CACEROLAZOS"

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WERE NUMEROUS AND VERY LOUD. THE 1/7 ACCOUNT IN "EL NACIONAL" PROBABLY EXAGGERATED; IT SAID THAT "THOUSANDS OF PERSONS BEAT CACEROLAS, BUT ONLY A FEW FIRED BOTTLE ROCKETS" (SUPPOSEDLY A PRO-CHAVEZ ACT). IN HIS 1/7 NATIONAL ADDRESS, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ DENIED ANY CACEROLAZO DURING THE CATIA VISIT AND MADE [REDACTED] ACCUSATIONS AGAINST EL NACIONAL" (LYING, INVOLVEMENT IN THE 'MEDIA CONSPIRACY,' ETC.).

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THE CHAVISTA ACTION

3. (U) THE CHAVEZ SUPPORTERS, ESTIMATED TO NUMBER BETWEEN 70 AND 100, ARRIVED AT THE NEWSPAPER AT AROUND 7:00 P.M. AND DEMONSTRATED UNTIL 9:00 P.M., WHEN THE POLICE INTERVENED WITH TEAR GAS AND WATER CANNON. THE APPARENT INTENT OF THE PROTEST WAS TO BLOCK THE NEWSPAPER FROM CIRCULATING THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE GROUP APPEARED TO BE LED BY, I.E., LINA RON, WHOSE PREVIOUS FAME AS AN MVR STREET WARRIOR OWED TO HER LEADING THE BURNING OF A U.S. FLAG AT A RALLY AGAINST CARACAS MAYOR ALFREDO PENA; CARLOS BESON, LABOR DIRECTOR OF LIBERTADOR (DOWNTOWN CARACAS) MUNICIPALITY; RICHARD PENALVER, LIBERTADOR CITY COUNCILMAN; AND BORIS BURGOS, THE ALTERNATE FOR MVR AN MEMBER NICOLAS MADURO. THE PROTESTERS CARRIED POSTERS IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AS MEMBERS OF A BOLIVARIAN CIRCLE. THE DEMONSTRATION WAS NOT VIOLENT, AND THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF AGGRESSION AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND TV CAMERAS COVERING THE EVENT.

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4. (U) THE SLOGANS INCLUDED "TELL THE TRUTH, OR WE'LL BURN YOU DOWN"; "TELL THE TRUTH, OR WE'LL BEAT YOU"; AND "TELLING THE TRUTH COSTS NOTHING BUT IS WORTH MUCH." THE SIGNS ALSO REFERRED TO THE CONSTITUTION'S "TRUE INFORMATION" ARTICLE AND CRITICIZED "EL NACIONAL" OWNER MIGUEL ENRIQUE OTERO AND SEVERAL JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE PUBLISHED ARTICLES CHARGING HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS WITH CORRUPTION. LINA RON STATED TO REPORTERS, "WE HAD WARNED THE MEDIA TO TELL THE TRUTH. BEGINNING TODAY, WE ARE GOING TO RETURN THE MEDIA TO THE PEOPLE. GET READY, MEDIA AND TV CHANNELS; IT'S GLOBOVISION'S TURN NEXT."

EL NACIONAL REACTS

5. (U) "EL NACIONAL" OWNER OTERO, SPEAKING FIRST BY PHONE AND THEN IN THE STUDIO WITH ALL-NEWS TV GLOBOVISION, BLAMED LIBERTADOR MAYOR FREDDY BERNAL FOR ORGANIZING THE DEMONSTRATORS (THE PAPER'S COVERAGE WAS HEADLINED "BERNAL'S

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 000026

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BRIGADES BLOCKADE DOORS OF EL NACIONAL") AND PRESIDENT
CHAVEZ FOR HAVING INCITED IT. COMPARING THE PROTEST TO
"MUSSOLINI'S ITALY," HE VOWED TO CONTINUE THE NEWSPAPER'S
EDITORIAL AND INFORMATIVE POLICIES. OTERO PREDICTED THAT
MORE SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS WERE TO COME AGAINST OTHER MEDIA.

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